



Town of Groton, Connecticut

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Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter

Tuesday, July 1, 2008

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m. by Mayor Harry Watson.

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Streeter

Members Absent: Councilor Sheets

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Office Assistant Lori Watrous.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Niel Spillane, former Mayor of Groton.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

2008-0163 Proclamation for Relay for Life

Mayor Watson read a proclamation recognizing the American Cancer Society's Tenth Annual Relay for Life.

Recognition of Bachelor's Degree

Councilor Streeter commended Mayor Watson for the completion of his Bachelor's Degree from Eastern Connecticut State University.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Niel Spillane, 47 High Street, Mystic, expressed concern regarding the Copp Property resolution on the agenda. Mr. Spillane suggested that the Council consider two questions when deliberating potential uses for the property. First, does the Town actually want what is being proposed and is it willing to pay for it; and second, is the Copp Property the appropriate place for the proposed facilities. Mr. Spillane requested that the Council reconsider its vote on this resolution.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

None.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2008-0170 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of June 17, 2008 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Administrative Items

2008-0172 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Bruce and Kathleen Flax - \$20.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 John and Lisa Reeves - \$15.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Susan and Scott Berry - \$25.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Lori Smith - \$25.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Cidalia Schott - \$25.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Duane and Patricia Grant - \$25.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Chad and Tina Copeland - \$20.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Robert Cronan - \$50.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Marie Streimer - \$20.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Ronald and Christina Adams - \$25.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Mark and Debra Luke - \$15.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Luanne and John Hespeler - \$15.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Various Donations - \$110.73 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
 George Marshall - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
 Union Baptist Church - \$1,680.00 - Social Services Discretionary
 John and Linda Crosskey - \$50.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
 Betsey Fox - \$100.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
 Dorothea B. Moore - \$100.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
 Rivka Horowitz, M.D. and Harold Pessirilo - \$100.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
 David G. Williams - \$50.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
 Paul and Sheila Scott - \$25.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
 Robert and Sarah McQuilkin - \$50.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
 Dr. John and Marcia McGowan - \$50.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
 Fitch High School Association Key Club - \$900.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Groton/Ledyard Rotary - \$1000.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 James Lanyon - \$6.00 - Tercentennial Miscellaneous
 Pequot Cyclists - \$75.00 - Library Discretionary
 Pfizer United Way Campaign - \$50.00 - Library Discretionary
 G. Thomas Couser - \$25.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

c. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2007-0310 FYE 2009 Budget

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2008-0167 Department of Education Youth Services Enhancement Grant

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2007-0072 Citizen Committee on Property Tax Relief - Update

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2008-0088 Reconstruction of the Packer Road/Godfrey Road Intersection

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2008-0166 Meeting with Copp Board

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2008-0169 State Grant - Tercentennial Legacy Playground

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

2008-0171 Appointment of Hal Zod to the Zoning Commission

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adopt the Consent

Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.

The motion carried unanimously

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Councilor Schmidt received two calls, one feeling that commercial ventures should not be part of the usage of the Copp Property and the other concerned that there will be an unfair burden placed on young families if property tax relief is instituted.

Councilor Monteiro was approached with a request that the Public Hearing regarding the elderly tax relief be prominently advertised, including fliers at the Senior Center. She attended the joint Town Council/Board of Education meeting.

Councilor Brown-Tracy received the same call mentioned earlier regarding the Copp Property.

Councilor Bond received the same call mentioned regarding tax relief, and also two calls in favor of moving forward on the Copp Property.

Councilor Streeter received calls in favor of the Copp Property project and the volunteer firefighter legislation.

Councilor Kolnaski attended the Permanent School Building Committee meeting, the first graduation of the Catherine Kolnaski Magnet School, and the Ledge Light Health District Finance Committee meeting. She read a proclamation recognizing Relay for Life at Avery Point, and attended the retirement ceremony for Dr. Mitchell, Superintendent of Schools.

Councilor O'Beirne received the same calls already mentioned, and an email opposing the proposed tax relief. He attended a display by the Department of Transportation regarding the modification of the exits on I-95 between the Thames River Bridge and the Rhode Island border.

Mayor Watson went to the christening of the U.S.S. New Hampshire at Electric Boat. He attended two meetings at which there was discussion regarding the proposed magnet school on Thomas Road, a joint Town Council/Board of Education meeting, a Public Hearing regarding SubBase ground water monitoring, and a Southeastern Connecticut Water Association meeting. The Mayor was also present at the retirement celebration for Alan Benkert and the graduation ceremony at Fitch Senior High School for the Class of 2008.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

The RTM cancelled its July meeting due to lack of business.

c. Clerk of the Council

The Town Clerk reminded viewers that June was dog licensing month and encouraged those that have not licensed their dogs to do so. Town Council members received an updated schedule for the Charter Revision Commission, which will require special meetings so that the questions can be presented to voters in November 2008. The Town Clerk attended an archival workshop at the State Archives in Hartford; it was one of the best workshops that she has attended.

d. Town Manager

The Town Manager remarked that the rubberized surface at the Tercentennial Legacy Playground is being installed this week. He stated that Town offices are closed on July 4. The annual 4th of July parade will take place starting at Poquonnock Plains and proceeding to downtown Groton. Mr. Oefinger also reminded citizens that Household Hazardous Waste Collection day will be July 26, 2008 at the Transfer Station on Flanders Road.

e. Town Attorney

No report.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Brown-Tracy

No meeting, no report.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond

Councilor Bond stated that there was a brief meeting on June 24, 2008.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting, no report.

d. Environment/Energy - Chairman Sheets

A meeting took place on June 24, 2008, and Councilor Sheets will give her report at the next Town Council meeting.

e. Finance - Chairman Schmidt

Councilor Schmidt read the minutes of the meeting held on June 24, 2008, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman O'Beirne

Councilor O'Beirne read the minutes of the meeting held on June 24, 2008, which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Streeter

Councilor Streeter stated that there was a brief meeting on June 24, 2008.

h. Public Works/Recreation - Chairman Monteiro

Councilor Monteiro stated that a brief meeting was held on June 24, 2008; the minutes are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson

Committee of the Whole had discussions regarding a grant for the Tercentennial Playground, the proposed elderly tax relief, the reconstruction at Packer and Godfrey Roads, and the Copp Board Conceptual Plan.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

X. NEW BUSINESS

2008-0167 Department of Education Youth Services Enhancement Grant

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER OR HIS DESIGNEE TO APPLY TO THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR FY 2009 YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU ENHANCEMENT GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING

WHEREAS, Youth Services Bureau Enhancement Grant Program Funding is available in the amount of \$7,550 from the State of Connecticut Department of Education to enhance existing Groton Youth and Family Services programs that provide direct services to youth in areas ranging from counseling to youth enrichment, outreach programs and positive youth development, and

WHEREAS, Groton Youth and Family Services has demonstrated its success in providing a program, Groton SeaLegs, via Virtual Voyages, Inc., that will subsequently be expanded with FY 09 Enhancement Funding to serve additional at-risk Groton youth, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Manager, Mark R. Oefinger, or his designee is authorized to apply for and contract with the State of Connecticut Department of Education for FY 09 Youth Services Enhancement Grant Program Funding in the amount of \$7,550.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be

Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0072

Citizen Committee on Property Tax Relief - Update

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PREPARATION OF AN ORDINANCE FOR TAX RELIEF

WHEREAS, the Town Council has considered the advisability of offering a program of property tax relief for elderly and disabled taxpayers as authorized by Section 12-129n of the Connecticut General Statutes, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council deems it necessary and appropriate to enact such a tax relief by means of a Town ordinance, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council authorizes and directs Town staff and the office of the Town Attorney to prepare an ordinance for elderly and disabled tax relief for preliminary review and approval by the Town Council.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor O'Beirne stated that he will be opposing this resolution because he feels that the limitations are far too liberal and would open the program to many individuals that are not really in need.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Streeter
Opposed: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

2008-0088

Reconstruction of the Packer Road/Godfrey Road Intersection

RESOLUTION APPROVING THE LAND EXCHANGE AT THE INTERSECTION OF GODFREY AND PACKER ROADS

WHEREAS, Godfrey Road and Packer Road are scheduled for repaving which could increase traffic and vehicular speeds, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Department of Public Works has recommended a realignment of the intersection of Godfrey and Packer Roads, creating a "T" intersection to improve safety, and

WHEREAS, the realignment to create a safer intersection requires a land swap between the Town and an adjacent property owner, and

WHEREAS, the Groton Planning Commission considered the proposed land exchange pursuant to CGS 8-24 at its May 13, 2008, meeting and views the proposal favorably, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has held a public hearing on June 17, 2008 concerning this potential land exchange at which no testimony was presented contrary to the proposed land exchange, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council approves the land exchange at the intersection of Godfrey and Packer Roads.

Refer to RTM

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted and Referred to the Representative Town Meeting.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0166

Meeting with Copp Board

PLAN

WHEREAS, in January 1989, the Town of Groton obtained a 240 acre parcel of land, then known as the Center Groton Farm and thereafter designated as the Copp Family Park, and

WHEREAS, the Town and the Copp Board of Overseers are parties to an "Agreement of Land Restrictions and Covenants" concerning this property, which restricts the uses of the land to "public purposes as open space, park and recreation," and

WHEREAS, on September 13, 2006 the Town of Groton entered into a Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding with the Copp Family Park Board of Overseers, in which both parties mutually agreed that "no activity can be undertaken on the property that is not expressly agreed to by the Town and the Board," and

WHEREAS, the Copp Board prepared a Copp Property Conceptual Plan and Features Specification to aid them in justifying and raising future funds for recreation facilities and improvements, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has met with the Copp Board in June 2006 and again in June 2008, pursuant to the Copp Board's desire to further clarify and interpret features of the Proposed Conceptual Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council expects that the Copp Board will seek an advisory opinion from the Connecticut Department of Public Health as to whether construction of structures per the Conceptual Plan is feasible under applicable watershed regulations, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council asserts that its endorsements of aspects of the Copp Park plans, both now and heretofore, are intended to aid the Copp Board and the Groton Parks Foundation to raise funds and refine their plans, and do not embody either an obligation or a specific intention on the Council's part to approve building or development plans, or the appropriation of Town funds or other funds, for any specific future project within the Copp Park, without further review and action, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby endorses the suggested Copp Property Conceptual Plan approved by the Copp Board November 30, 2006, as transmitted by letter dated May 24, 2007.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted as Amended.

Councilor O'Beirne raised a "Point of Order" referring specifically to the final RESOLVED paragraph where it states that the Town Council hereby endorses the "Interpretation and Modification" approved by the Copp Board. He stated that at the last Committee of the Whole meeting the Town Council voted to approve the suggested "Copp Board Conceptual Plan", which did not include the "Interpretation and Modification".

The Town Manager stated that Councilor O'Beirne is correct and he would recommend that the Council take out the words "Interpretation and Modification" and replace them with "Copp Property Conceptual Plan".

Councilor Monteiro noted that when the Town Council talked with the Copp Board it was very clear that the Council was not approving specific uses for the property.

Councilor Streeter believes that one key word was omitted. He would like the word "suggested" to be added to allow leeway for whatever may be presented in the future.

MOTION TO AMEND the final RESOLVED paragraph by changing the words "Interpretation and Modification" to read "suggested Copp Property Conceptual Plan" was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski.

VOTE on Motion to Amend passed unanimously.

Councilor Monteiro stated that during the discussions with the Board of Overseers they needed some sort of backing of the Council and not necessarily an approval of the plan as presented. This backing will allow fund-raising to begin.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Streeter
Opposed: 2 - Councilor Brown-Tracy and Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

2008-0169 State Grant - Tercentennial Legacy Playground

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT FOR A TERCENTENNIAL LEGACY PLAYGROUND GRANT

RESOLVED, that Mark R. Oefinger, Town Manager of the Town of Groton, be and hereby is authorized to execute on behalf of this municipal corporation a Personal Services Agreement with the State of Connecticut for financial assistance in the amount of \$50,000 for the Tercentennial Park Playscape (CSAP 2008-24), and be it further

RESOLVED, that Mark R. Oefinger is hereby authorized to enter into such agreements, contracts and execute all documents necessary to said grant with the State of Connecticut.

BE IT FURTHER KNOWN that Mark R. Oefinger was appointed Town Manager. His term of office began on July 1, 2002 and continues to date. As the Town Manager, Mark R. Oefinger serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the Town of Groton, and is duly authorized to enter into agreements and contracts on behalf of the Town of Groton.

A motion was made by Councilor Brown-Tracy, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2008-0171 Appointment of Hal Zod to the Zoning Commission

RESOLUTION APPOINTING HAL ZOD AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Hal Zod, 140 High Meadow Lane, Mystic, is hereby appointed as an alternate member to the Planning Commission for a term expiring 12/31/10.

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor O'Beirne stated that the interviewing committee was impressed with Mr. Zod's enthusiasm and knowledge.

The motion carried unanimously

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:28 p.m. was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

Lori Watrous, Office Assistant